

Workbook *Am I Ready to Date?*
Assignment *Feeling Alone*

Overview A dating relationship will demonstrate healthy components when partners bring positive qualities into it. Knowing personal strengths and weaknesses demonstrates self-awareness and is helpful when choosing a dating partner. Dating for the wrong reasons will be problematic.

Objectives

- ◆ Participants will evaluate their readiness to date.
- ◆ Participants will identify their personal interests and dating expectations.
- ◆ Participants will understand the importance of choosing someone to date with whom they have things in common.
- ◆ Participants will clarify their feelings and motivations for dating.

Vocabulary

motivation	strengths
maturity	weaknesses

Key Concepts

- Self-awareness must be realistic.
- Everyone has strengths and weaknesses.
- Expectations will influence dating behaviors.
- Some people need more time to mature before dating.
- Dating should be for the right reasons.
- Feelings of loneliness must be addressed honestly.

Preparation for Lesson

Instructor will need:

- Chalkboard or writing surface
- Overhead transparencies **Strengths and Weaknesses**, **Reasons for Feeling Alone**, and **What To Do**
- Worksheets *Am I Ready To Date?* and *Feeling Alone*

- Introduce the concept of loneliness by stating that most people will feel isolated from others at different times throughout life. These feelings are temporary and usually go away when we are around people we like. Open the discussion of this topic by using the overhead **Reasons for Feeling Alone**. Ask the participants to read through the list of reasons why teenagers often experience feelings of loneliness. Inform them that these feelings can put one in a position of weakness.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can feeling lonely be a motivator for making friends or going out with another person?
 2. How can feeling lonely be a problem for someone who wants to make friends or be important to another person?
- Conclude discussion using the overhead transparency **What To Do**.

LECTURE NOTES:

There is no such thing as the "perfect" person to date. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses but they are different from one person to another. A positive identity is formed when one can focus and build on strengths and minimize weaknesses. The self-confident person will generally seek out others who demonstrate a similar level of competence. Individuals who bring a positive but realistic self-perception into a friendship situation have the best chance of developing successful dating relationships.

The majority of adolescents desire to be part of a larger peer group. Such groups are very important to social development for a number of reasons. Peer groups provide support for ideas, dress, music and values. Teenagers learn from their friends what kinds of behaviors are accepted and rewarded. Belonging to a group is the surest sign of acceptance and affirmation. Adolescents who have difficulty forming friendships, often have problems in other areas as well.

The ability to form significant bonds with others does not suddenly materialize during the adolescent years. Developing close relationships with others outside of the family is a natural process for individuals who have experienced similar relationships at an earlier time in their life. Young people will generally draw skills from the model they know best, the family. Unfortunately there is no guarantee that the model they have experienced is a good one. Family history can provide either a positive or negative influence. All teenagers go through a period of adjustment along the way to adulthood, but teenagers from loving, supportive families are able to adapt to the challenges more easily.

However, many young people today are not emotionally ready to make the transition because they have not experienced a positive support system during their developmental years. They find themselves unprepared to meet the challenges of a close relationship with others outside of the home. If social skills are inadequate or there is no previous experience with close meaningful love relationships to draw from, the young person is at a decided disadvantage.

While some people prefer to be alone so that they can think or do creative work, there are others who feel disconnected and lonely through no choice of their own. Unsuccessful attempts to connect with others may lead to confusion and self-doubt. A young person may not understand why the relationships are not working out. Sometimes, the fear of rejection alone is enough to keep an adolescent from developing friendships or asking another person to go out on a date. When one experiences difficulty making friends or being included as part of a larger group it can lead to feelings of isolation, rejection and depression.

Adolescents who feel alone are in a vulnerable position. In the urgency to be connected, they may be motivated to date for the wrong reasons. Isolated or lonely adolescents often feel a strong desire to be with another person in order to fill a perceived void in their life. This approach to dating is from a position of *need* rather than from a position of *strength*. The young person is then open to a host of behavioral influences that tend to center around immediate gratification and temporary closeness, but rarely provides true stability or fulfillment. Early sexual experimentation, high-risk behaviors, destructive tendencies, alcohol and drug use, depression and suicide are linked to adolescents who feel lonely and disconnected.

It is important to understand one's true motivation for dating. The best dating partner is one who is emotionally healthy and has a positive self-concept. Young people should be encouraged to honestly evaluate their current emotional state and level of functioning. If feelings of isolation and disconnection are present, they must be recognized and addressed. Adolescents should be informed that they can receive help from parents, qualified school personnel, community and health professionals.

AM I READY TO DATE?

Developing a successful dating relationship with another person requires a high level of maturity and knowledge about your self. Entering a relationship too soon or for the wrong reasons may prove to be a negative experience for you and/or your partner. It is important to have a clear idea of your own goals and interests before dating. Check the statements below that best describe you and your readiness for dating.

A Who am I?

1. *Personality characteristics:*

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> outgoing | <input type="checkbox"/> quiet and reserved | List your best qualities:

_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make friends easily | <input type="checkbox"/> draw attention to myself | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> interested in others | <input type="checkbox"/> a good listener | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make good decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> tend to be a follower | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> care about others | <input type="checkbox"/> have a positive attitude | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> on time | <input type="checkbox"/> don't like to plan ahead | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> get angry easily | |

2. *Personality characteristics:*

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> go dancing | <input type="checkbox"/> watch movies | <input type="checkbox"/> try new things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> play sports | <input type="checkbox"/> listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> talk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> go shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> nothing | <input type="checkbox"/> a hobby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> party | <input type="checkbox"/> be with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> go places |
| <input type="checkbox"/> draw/paint | <input type="checkbox"/> volunteer my time | <input type="checkbox"/> help other people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work out | <input type="checkbox"/> read | |

3. *Skills or talents:*

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> athletics | <input type="checkbox"/> art/musical ability | <input type="checkbox"/> leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> writing | <input type="checkbox"/> academics | <input type="checkbox"/> planning activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> making things | <input type="checkbox"/> getting along with others | |

4. *Personal goals:*

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> finish high school | <input type="checkbox"/> get a job | <input type="checkbox"/> go to college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> travel | <input type="checkbox"/> make a good income | <input type="checkbox"/> get married |
| <input type="checkbox"/> become physically fit | <input type="checkbox"/> be a parent | <input type="checkbox"/> stay single |

B. Relating to others

1. *Comfort zone:*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> like groups of people | <input type="checkbox"/> avoid groups of people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spend time alone | <input type="checkbox"/> spend time with family |

2. *Friends:*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a few close friends | <input type="checkbox"/> lots of friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a best friend | <input type="checkbox"/> no close friends |

3. *Successful relationships:*

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> parents | <input type="checkbox"/> grandparents | <input type="checkbox"/> siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> friends | <input type="checkbox"/> teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> other adults |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my date | <input type="checkbox"/> fellow workers | |

C. What am I bringing *into* the relationship?

Maturity level:

- have the time and energy to give to another person
- am willing to listen when my partner wants to discuss something
- want to help my partner feel secure and comfortable
- can handle problems and make decisions
- am able to keep promises
- don't feel threatened when my partner isn't with me

D. What do I expect *from* the relationship?

1. *From the other person:*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> being a priority for him/her | <input type="checkbox"/> a sense of closeness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> respect for my ideas/opinions | <input type="checkbox"/> being liked and accepted |

2. *Support system – family/friends:*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> like the person I am dating | <input type="checkbox"/> don't like the person I am dating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> don't know I am dating this person | <input type="checkbox"/> their opinions don't matter |

3. *Dating should be:*

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> fun | <input type="checkbox"/> casual | <input type="checkbox"/> serious | <input type="checkbox"/> safe |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|

FEELING ALONE

Having friends and being connected to others provides an important support system throughout life. It is good to know that the people you are closest to genuinely care about and accept you. However, we don't always feel connected to others. Even individuals who are in stable relationships can experience times of distance from one another. Usually these feelings come and go as situations change. But, for some people feelings of loneliness and isolation don't go away.

Instructions: Complete the following exercise by circling the words that most closely describe feelings you may be experiencing.

YOU FREQUENTLY FEEL:

Angry at everyone

Misunderstood

Helpless

Isolated

People don't like me

People won't like me

Inferior

Ignored

Frustrated

Depressed

Picked-on

Like getting even

Sad for no reason

Disappointed in yourself

Hopeless

Like giving up

Like crying

Sorry you were born

Overwhelmed

Guilt

CHECK YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM:

1. Is there someone you feel close to? Yes No

2. Who is this person? _____

3. What is your relationship to this person? _____

4. Is this person an adult or someone closer to your age? _____

5. How long have you known this person? _____

6. To whom would you go if you had a problem? _____

7. Why did you choose this person? _____

8. Does this person understand your feelings most of the time? _____

9. Can you tell this person anything and not fear that the relationship will be hurt?

10. Have you ever shared something personal with someone who then betrayed your trust?

11. How does that make you feel about trusting someone again? _____

12. Do you tend to help others with their problems but ignore issues in your own life?

If you have answered the above questions and have learned that you are experiencing feelings of isolation, it is important that you develop a resource for help as soon as possible. Tell a responsible adult what you are feeling. Many people in a community are specifically trained to help in this type of situation. The people most likely to help are parents, counselors, teachers, health professionals, and clergy.

NEVER FEEL GUILTY ABOUT ASKING FOR HELP.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Find a knowledgeable, caring adult you can trust.
2. Allow yourself to be honest about your feelings.
3. Believe that others can accept and understand what you are experiencing.
4. Recognize that situations will change and improve over time.
5. Understand that it is sometimes necessary and wise to ask for help, it is not a sign of personal weakness.